

Message Text

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PAGE 01 TUNIS 01227 221653Z

ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 ERDA-05 AID-05 CEA-01 CIAE-00

CIEP-01 COME-00 DODE-00 EB-08 FEAE-00 FPC-01 H-01

INR-07 INT-05 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 OMB-01 PM-04

USIA-06 OES-06 SP-02 SS-15 STR-04 TRSE-00 ACDA-07

PA-01 PRS-01 NEAE-00 /112 W

-----221700 000637 /40

P R 221620Z FEB 77

FM AMEMBASSY TUNIS

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 5845

INFO AMEMBASSY TRIPOLI

AMEMBASSY ALGIERS

AMEMBASSY ROME

AMEMBASSY PARIS

AMEMBASSY VALLETTA

AMEMBASSY LONDON

USCOMSIXTHFLT

CINCUSNAVEUR

C O N F I D E N T I A L TUNIS 1227

E.O.11652: GDS

TAGS: PLOS ENRG TS LY

SUBJECT: LIBYAN/TUNISIAN INCIDENT OVER SAIPEM DRILLING

OPERATION IN DISPUTED AREA OF CONTINENTAL SHELF

1. BEGIN UNCLASSIFIED: SUMMARY: TUNISIAN/LIBYAN INCIDENT INVOLVING
ITALIAN

DRILLING IN THE GULF OF GABES MADE PUBLIC FEBRUARY 22 IN
TUNIS NEWSPAPERS, WHICH FRONT PAGE VARIOUS ASPECTS OF STORY.

"LE TEMPS" HEADLINES DEPARTURE OF LIBYAN INTERIOR MINISTER
H'MIDI KHOUILKI AFTER THREE-DAY VISIT HERE TO DISCUSS "INCI-
DENT ON CONTINENTAL SHELF" WITH GOT LEADERSHIP, INCLUDING
PRESIDENT BOURGUIBA. SECOND HEADLINE IN "LE TEMPS"

DECLARES "NAVY PREVENTS LIBYAN DRILLING OPERATION IN THE
GULF OF GABES" AND THIRD STORY ON PRIME MINISTER NOUIRA

CONFIDENTIAL

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PAGE 02 TUNIS 01227 221653Z

INTERVIEW WITH ITALIAN NEWSPAPER ("IL MESSAGERO") REPORTER

HEADLINED "LAIPEM HAS OPERATED ON BEHALF OF LIBYA IN A

ZONE OF TUNISIAN SOVEREIGNTY." NOT CLEAR FROM PRESS COVERAGE

WHETHER ITALIAN SHIP HAS ACTUALLY DEPARTED. END SUMMARY.

2. LEAD STORY IN "LE TEMPS" SAYS NO OFFICIAL INDICATION WAS

GIVEN AT CONCLUSION OF KHOULDI'S VISIT AS TO TENOR OF DIS-

CUSSIONS, BUT RELIABLE SOURCES BELIEVE THEY DEALT WITH "INCIDENT WHICH TOOK PLACE LAST WEEK IN GULF OF GABES." STORY CONTINUES THAT SAIPEM DRILLING PLATFORM HAVING BEEN INSTALLED IN ZONE DISPUTED BETWEEN TUNIS AND TRIPOLI, "UNITS OF THE NAVY HAD PROCEEDED TO THE SITE TO ASK INSISTENTLY FOR THE WITHDRAWAL OF INSTALLATIONS. FINALLY, THEY HAD OBTAINED SATISFACTION." SECOND STORY, ALSO CARRIED IN ALL TUNIS DAILIES, NOTES THAT PRESIDENT BOURGUIBA RECEIVED LIBYAN MINISTER AT NOON FEBRUARY 21 IN PRESENCE OF MINISTERS CHATTY AND TAHAR BELKHOJA AND SUBSEQUENTLY ENTERTAINED LIBYAN AS LUNCHEON GUEST.

3. THIRD STORY ALSO IN GOT PARTY DAILY L'ACTION QUOTES NOUIRA'S RESPONSE TO QUESTIONS OF ITALIAN REPORTER IN RESPECT TO "RECENT INTERVENTION OF TUNISIAN AUTHORITIES TO ASK THAT DRILLING COMPANY AFFILIATED WITH ENI BREAK-OFF WORK IT HAD JUST STARTED ON BEHALF OF LIBYA" IN GULF OF GABES AND BROADER PROBLEM OF CONTINENTAL SHELF. NOUIRA SAID "IN EFFECT, SAIPEM, OPERATING ON BEHALF OF LIBYA, HAD JUST SET ITSELF UP IN A ZONE WHICH WE CONSIDER AS BEING ZONE OF TUNISIAN SOVEREIGNTY. UNDER SUCH CIRCUMSTANCES, THE RESPONSE CALLED FOR IS TO ASK THAT THE INTRUDER WITHDRAW FROM THE SITE. THAT IS WHAT WAS DONE. IF A SHIP HAD JUST STATIONED ITSELF IN YOUR TERRITORIAL WATERS, WHAT MEASURES WOULD YOU CHOOSE? YOU COULD ONLY CIVILLY INDICATE TO HIM HIS ERROR AND ASK HIM LEAVE THE SITE."

4. IN RESPECT TO BROADER QUESTION OF STATUS OF CONTINENTAL SHELF DISPUTE, NOUIRA DECLARED, "WE HAVE SAME LEGAL POSITION IN REGARD TO LIBYA THAT WE HAD IN RESPECT TO ITALY ON DEMARCATION OF TUNISIAN/ITALIAN CONTINENTAL SHELF. IF ITALY HAD

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 03 TUNIS 01227 221653Z

AGREED THAT OUR POSITION WAS BASED NOT ONLY ON PRINCIPLES OF INTERNATIONAL LAW, BUT ALSO JURISPRUDENCE, YOU TOO WOULD BE SURPRISED THAT LIBYA COULD NOT FOR ITS PART ADMIT THIS. THEREFORE, THERE ARE ONLY TWO WAYS TO RESOLVE THIS PROBLEM: ONE- THE BETTER WAS-CONSISTS OF SERIOUSLY SEEKING A SOLUTION ON THE BASIS OF BI-LATERAL AGREEMENT; THE SECOND, TO WHICH LIBYA IS COMMITTED, IS APPEAL TO INTERNATIONAL ARBITRATION TO SETTLE THE DISPUTE IN LIGHT OF LAW AND INTERNATIONAL PRECEDENT. END UNCLASSIFIED.

5. BEGIN CONFIDENTIAL: COMMENT: LE TEMPS ARTICLE LEAVES IMPRESSION THAT DRILLING VESSEL HAS BEEN WITHDRAWN FROM TUNISIAN CONTINENTAL SHELF, BUT IN FACT GOES NO FURTHER THAN SAYING THAT IT BELIEVED GOT HAS "OBTAINED SATISFACTION" FROM ITALIANS. IF SHIP HAS NOT MOVED, PRESS COVERAGE MAY BE ATTEMPT TO PUT PRESSURE ON ITALIANS TO HONOR COMMITMENT THAT HAS SUPPOSEDLY BEEN MADE TO GOT. END CONFIDENTIAL.
MULCAHY

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Message Attributes

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Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
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Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
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